



Chinmaya Rameshwaram Turns Three!



Amidst avowed recommitment to serving the community, the third anniversary of Southern California's Chinmaya Mission center 'Rameshwaram', was marked, as has been custom, with prayer and puja rituals that invoked the Supreme, and sought the blessings and guidance of Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda.

The January 12 event at the center, here, began in the morning with homas including the Rama Bheja Homam and the Sudarshana Homam, which among other things is believed to keep away all negative energies and retain the auspicious ones. The devout gathered to witness its conduct by Sanatan Dharma priest Subramaniam and participated with the chanting of the holy slokas.

Swami Ishwarananda will be a leading a group of yatis from CMLA, Minnesota and India to

Mt. Kailash and Manasarovar in July this year. All yatis who were in commuting distance from Rameshwaram were asked, as part of their sankalpa to bring in their japamalas which were placed at the padukas of Gurudev. The padukas themselves were carried in ceremoniously to the beat of the Chenda by Acharya Mahadevi, to the altar that was set up for the occasion. Devotees then took part in the Guru Paduka Puja led by Swamiji and Mahadevi who led the archana segment – the chanting of 108



names of the guru - in melody and followed it with the ever-pleasing 'Hari Om, Hari Om' bhajan.

Chinmaya Swaranjali then presented a garland of musical offerings in the form of

tion on 'Sadhana.' Swamiji urged all to continue focused on their sadhana and in the new year make effective resolutions. Mahadevi, in his brief talk, also zeroed in on sadhana and suggested that

all use the 20/20/20 method wherein there is 20 minutes each given to yoga/walk, meditation and swadhyaya.

Earlier, a short and informal ceremony honoring long time members and donors Shirish and Pushpa Patel was held at the entrance to the temple where Swamiji lauded their contributions which had gone in helping towards its renovation. The Patels then unveiled a plaque placed at the entrance in recognition of this.

The event concluded with lunch prasad for all.



Monthly Discourses on Valmiki Ramayan Begins

Swami Ishwarananda began the monthly series of talks on the Valmiki Ramayan in January. The large hall at Rameshwaram saw large turnouts each evening and in the morning.

Swamiji be explaining each verse from the text that has over 24,000 verses. Indeed in his first introductory set of talks, Swamiji not only set in context the perspective of Sage Valmiki in writing the Ramayan but also went into the siksha and chandas of the author's treatment of Sanskrit.

Swamiji fluently referred and will continue to refer to traditional commentaries of ancient scholars during his lecture series.

This will be a monthly series of five talks per month, usually during the first Monday to Friday of the month.



Antelope Valley BV Celebrate Spring Festivals

Antelope Valley Bal Vihar celebrated the festivals of Pongal, Lohri and Makar Sankranti on January 18. Parents, grandparents and kids participated enthusiastically in the celebration. A beautiful and enlightening article on the significance and symbolism of these festivals was published in the January 2013 issue of the Chinmaya Mission Bal Vihar magazine. The kids took turns reading this article to rest of the group, which was followed by a short discussion and Q & A session. Parents shared their own experiences and the regional rituals of celebration. The vastness and deepness of the Indian culture was thus reinforced among the kids.

After the arati, a bonfire was lit to commemorate the festival of Lohri. Traditional offerings of popcorn, raw peanuts and "revri" (sesame seed and sugar/jaggery candy) were offered into the flames. While chanting the Gayatri mantra, kids, parents and grandparents circumambulated the fire with equal enthusiasm. This was followed by a potluck dinner. Everyone enjoyed the vast variety of food and relished chakra pongal among other desserts.

Health is Wealth Seminar Series resumes at Rameshwaram

The "Health is Wealth" seminar series formatted as a community health service project that benefits CMLA members and the general public resumed in January with presentations on the subject, "Have a healthy heart - Ayurveda and Allopathy Perspective."

Series host and Clinical Ayurveda Specialist Hema Ravikumar and Dr. Ravi Jandhyala, Guest Speaker, Chief Interventional Cardiologist, Kaiser, Orange County made in-depth clinical presentations. Both, the allopathy and ayurveda sides presented the pathogenesis of heart disease, key factors in heart health, aspects of preventive management and simple diet and lifestyle interventions that can make the difference between life and death - literally.

Ravikumar began her speech asking a series of questions that dramatically honed in on key cardiovascular disease risk factors such as "Are you of Indian descent?" and "Do you still fit into your wedding outfit?" Tracing the thoroughness of Ayurvedic medicine's diagnosis and treatment of heart disease, she emphasized customized recommendations according to one's unique "dosha" - mind - body type as part of therapeutic protocol. Providing broad guidelines



that were preventive in nature and were related to both body and mind, she concluded with "meditate, don't just medicate."

Thousands of years later allopathy echoes these very same intervention methods. Speaking about the causes of heart disease, Dr. Jandhyala emphasized the Indian population's vulnerability pointing out that more and more people are dying before the age of 45 from heart disease, and urged all to look at their exercise and diet choices care-



fully. He spoke of the poor Indian tendency to snack on greasy foods and sweets and highlighted the dangers of sedentary lifestyle on cardiovascular health. Jandhyala also presented an informative video clip that illustrated the progress of plaque buildup and arterial damage.

Many questions that packed the hall had the audience that both speakers addressed systematically and thoroughly. More talks are planned.

Please send articles and pictures for publication to Nimmi Raghunathan: nimmicmla@gmail.com
Many thanks to Archana Bhargava, Raj Chidella, Surendra Prakash